

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

OF

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FOR

LAUNDRY DRIER

[0001] This application claims the benefit of Korean Application No. 10-2002-0073852 filed on November 26, 2002, which is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to a laundry drier, and more particularly, to a laundry drier provided with a pulse detector, employed in conjunction with a moisture sensor, to determine the amount of laundry put in the drier.

Discussion of the Related Art

[0003] In general, a laundry drier is an apparatus for drying wet objects, e.g., clothes, after completion of a washing cycle or the like. FIG. 1 illustrates such a laundry drier.

[0004] Referring to FIG. 1, a drum 2 for holding laundry is installed rotatably inside a cabinet 1 having a front side in which an entrance 3 is provided. A door 4 is installed in the entrance 3 so that laundry may be placed in the drum 2 via the entrance. A motor 5, installed in an upper space of the cabinet 1, is coupled to the drum 2 via a drum belt 6a such that the drum rotates when the motor is driven. As the drum 2 rotates, the laundry is stirred by a plurality of lifts 7 installed on an inner surface of the drum. Meanwhile, the motor 5 is differentially coupled, via a fan belt 6b, to a fan 9 installed in a space provided behind the drum 2. By thus driving the fan 9, hot air, heated by a heater 11, is circulated through a series of ducts. A circulation duct 8 is provided such that the space provided for the fan 9 communicates with a point near the entrance 3, with an external air supply duct 12 for supplying external air, and with a drain duct 13 for discharging condensed water generated from the circulating hot air.

[0005] In the operation of a laundry drier constructed as above, with wet laundry

placed in the drum 2, the laundry drier is actuated to drive the motor 5 and thereby rotate the drum, so that the laundry is pulled upward by the lifts 7 to fall back down and be gently mixed. Meanwhile, the driving force of the motor 5 is also transferred to the fan 9, thus circulating the air in the circulation duct 8. The circulating air is heated by the heater 11, and
5 the heated air is supplied to the drum 2 to evaporate the water content of the laundry. Air circulation continues as external air is supplied to the circulation duct 8 through the external air supply duct 12, to be mixed with the heated air in the circulation duct. The water content in the circulating air is condensed to be discharged through the drain duct 13.

[0006] The drying of laundry using a laundry drier as described above is typically
10 performed by a controlling apparatus such as that illustrated in FIG. 2.

[0007] Referring to FIG. 2, a laundry drier according to a related art is comprised of a moisture sensor 20, installed with respect to the interior of a rotatable drum as described above, for sensing the water content of laundry in the drum to determine the drying status of the laundry and outputting a value indicative of the water content; a voltage converter 30 for
15 converting the water content value to a voltage and outputting a voltage signal; a microcomputer 40 for outputting a control signal to control a drying pattern based on the voltage signal output of the voltage converter; and a load driver 50 for respectively driving a motor 60 and a heater 70 according to the control signal output from the microcomputer. The water content value varies according to the drying status of the laundry, and the variation
20 is represented by the voltage output from the voltage converter 30 and input to the microcomputer 40. The microcomputer 40 thus determines the laundry's drying status by reading the input voltage and thereby monitoring the water content as the laundry dries, to control the dry pattern accordingly.

[0008] The above laundry drier according to the related art controls the dry pattern

based on water content alone, regardless of the amount of laundry placed in the drier. Here, the dry pattern is the cycle by which the drum, heater, and exhaust fan are controlled, and an optimum dry pattern is desirable. The amount of laundry, however, affects the optimum dry pattern. Thus, the laundry drier of the related art produces poor drying results.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] Accordingly, the present invention is directed to a laundry drier that substantially obviates one or more of the problems due to limitations and disadvantages of the related art.

10 [0010] An object of the present invention, which has been devised to solve the foregoing problem, lies in providing a laundry drier, by which the dry pattern is controlled based on an amount of laundry using a pulse signal generated from a count of contacts between a moisture sensor and the laundry.

[0011] It is another object of the present invention to provide a laundry drier in which
15 an optimum drying pattern is achieved.

[0012] It is another object of the present invention to provide a laundry drier that improves drying performance.

[0013] Additional features and advantages of the invention will be set forth in the description which follows, and in part will be apparent to those having ordinary skill in the art
20 upon examination of the following or may be learned from a practice of the invention. The objectives and other advantages of the invention will be realized and attained by the subject matter particularly pointed out in the specification and claims hereof as well as in the appended drawings.

To achieve these objects and other advantages in accordance with the present

invention, as embodied and broadly described herein, there is provided a laundry drier comprising a rotatable drum having an interior for holding laundry; a moisture sensor, installed with respect to the interior of the rotatable drum, for measuring water content in the laundry in the rotatable drum and outputting a value indicative of the water content; means for
5 converting the water content value output from the moisture sensor to a voltage and outputting a voltage signal; a pulse detector for outputting a pulse count generated from a contact count of the laundry coming into contact with the moisture sensor and outputting a pulsed signal indicative of the contact count; and a microcomputer for controlling a dry pattern based on the respective outputs of the converting means and the pulse detector.

10 **[0014]** The laundry drier according to the present invention uses the principle that a moisture sensor, for measuring the water content of laundry in a rotating drum holding an amount of laundry, inherently comes into intermittent contact with the laundry. The frequency of such contact is indicative of the amount of laundry in the drum.

15 **[0015]** It is to be understood that both the foregoing explanation and the following detailed description of the present invention are exemplary and illustrative and are intended to provide further explanation of the invention as claimed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

20 **[0016]** The accompanying drawings, which are included to provide a further understanding of the invention and are incorporated in and constitute a part of this application, illustrate embodiment(s) of the invention and together with the description serve to explain the principle of the invention. In the drawings:

[0017] FIG. 1 is a cross-sectional view of a general drier;

[0018] FIG. 2 is a block diagram of a control system of a laundry drier according to a

related art;

[0019] FIG. 3 is a block diagram of a control system of a laundry drier according to the present invention; and

[0020] FIG. 4A and FIG. 4B are graphs of sample waveforms produced by the pulse
5 detector in FIG. 3.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0021] Reference will now be made in detail to the preferred embodiment of the present invention, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

10 [0022] Referring to FIG. 3, a laundry drier according to the present invention is comprised of a moisture sensor 200, installed with respect to the interior of a rotatable drum as described above, for measuring the water content of laundry in the drum to determine the drying status of the laundry and outputting a value indicative of the water content; a voltage
15 converter 300 for converting the water content value to a voltage and outputting a voltage signal; a pulse detector 800 for detecting pulses according to a contact count of the laundry coming into contact with the moisture sensor and generating a pulsed signal indicative of the count; a microcomputer 400 for outputting a control signal to control a drying pattern based on the voltage signal output of the voltage converter; and a load driver 500 for respectively
20 driving a motor 600 and a heater 700 according to the control signal output from the microcomputer.

[0023] In the laundry drier according to the present invention, once a drying step is executed and the drum is rotated, the laundry in the drum is brought into contact with the moisture sensor 200 and thereby generates a voltage pulse for each contact. The pulse detector 800 counts the voltage pulses. Samples of such a count are illustrated in FIGS. 4A

and 4B.

[0024] During the rotation of the drum, whenever the laundry comes into contact with the moisture sensor 200, each generated voltage pulse is input to the microcomputer 400 through the pulse detector 800. If the amount of the laundry in the drum is small, the generated voltage pulses have a relatively long interval as shown in FIG. 4A, and the microcomputer 400 determines the laundry amount to be small. On the other hand, if the amount of the laundry in the drum is large, the generated voltage pulses have a relatively short interval as shown in FIG. 4, and the microcomputer 400 determines the laundry amount to be large. The microcomputer 400 respectively controls the drive times of the motor 600 and heater 700 accordingly, whereby drive time is increased for larger amounts and decreased for smaller amounts.

[0025] Therefore, the laundry drier according to the present invention controls the dry pattern based on both the amount of laundry and its water content, thereby achieving an optimum dry pattern to improve drying performance.

[0026] It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made in the present invention without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention. Thus, it is intended that the present invention cover such modifications and variations, provided they come within the scope of the appended claims and their equivalents.